

years, these problems have been swept under the table, and women have been hesitant about talking about them in public or even reporting them.

I am thankful that this trend is in reverse and the public is becoming more outraged about these heinous crimes against women. We, as leaders, must be willing to bring more attention to the fight against sexual assault and domestic violence.

By focusing public attention on these acts of brutality against women, we can raise public awareness. We can make a difference. We have already seen positive effects of the Violence Against Women Act, but that is just a start.

As the month of March draws to a close, I would like to point out that the month of April is nationally known as National Sexual Assault Awareness Month. I would like to see this designation made official.

Officially designating April as National Sexual Assault Awareness Month would raise public awareness. Violence against women is a large, unrecognized and all-too-often ignored problem in all of our communities. The costs of these violent acts is borne not only by the women who experience it, but by their families, communities and our Nation as a whole.

This is a national issue, and it must receive national attention. We must continue our congressional commitment to making our streets and homes safe for women and children.

A TRIBUTE TO GOVERNOR JOAN FINNEY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MORAN of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to convey my thoughts and prayers for the former governor of our State, Governor Joan Finney, and her family. Last month, Governor Finney was diagnosed with liver cancer. I wish her strength and courage as she fights this devastating disease.

Governor Finney has had a long and distinguished career in service to the public. She was a trailblazer for women in elective office, and her example has served as inspiration and a role model for others in our State and around the country.

Joan Finney served our State for 16 years as Kansas Treasurer. She started her career as a Republican and switched to become a Democrat.

In 1990, she became the first woman ever elected governor of our State. Governor Finney is truly a woman of the people.

Throughout her years of public service, she was able to connect to everyday Kansans in a way all of us who hold elective office can respect and admire.

I was privileged to serve in the Kansas Senate during Governor Finney's term as governor. During that time, she always had the well-being of the people of our State as her priority.

While we sometimes disagreed, I always knew where the Governor stood on each and every issue. She was honest and straightforward. No public opinion polls, no focus groups, just Joan Finney doing what she thought was best for the people she loved, the people of Kansas.

Governor Finney was always respectful, and her heart was always in the right place. She believed passionately in her positions and worked hard for the hard-working people of Kansas.

Family is very important to Governor Finney. Members of her family played key roles in her campaigns and in her administration.

I know that her family is with her now as she faces this great challenge. May the strength and goodwill that she displayed in her years as public service now help her defeat this terrible disease.

My thoughts and prayers go out to Governor Finney, to her husband Spencer and to her children, Sally Finney, Richard Finney and Mary Holliday.

Kansans care greatly for you, Mrs. Finney, and we pray God will bless you and give you courage and strength.

AMERICA'S FARMERS AND RANCHERS NEED A NEW FARM BILL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, the 276 million of us who do not work in the farming and ranching sectors need to take time today on National Agriculture Day to give thanks to the 700,000 men and women of American agriculture for all they do to feed our Nation and, indeed, much of the rest of the world.

Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to pay highest tribute to some of the hardest working people in America. I know of no other people who take such great financial risks, give more of themselves each and every day, and who do so with great discipline and dignity.

With the depression that is afflicting rural regions of our country, America needs a new declaration of economic independence, and that declaration should insist that America's farmers and ranchers are not expendable. Their husbandry and stewardship are central pillars of our national security and freedom.

Today, we are witnessing an alarming hollowing out of America's countryside and a wanton destruction of precious arable lands that have sustained us and on which future generations will depend.

Rural America is on life support. The current farm depression, now in its

fourth year, is the deepest since 1915. This year's prices were at a 27-year low.

The average age of our farmers is 57 years, and now they are getting over three-fourths of their earnings in public support because the market does not work for them.

And up until today, National Agriculture Day, what have we heard from the new administration? Silence. Not the peacefulness of the countryside, but the eerie solemnness of the graveyard.

President Bush, when he delivered his State of the Union address just a few weeks ago in this Chamber, had nothing to offer America's farmers. No plans. No solutions. No ideas. The budget that he has submitted so far suggests that agriculture's crisis will be taken care of out of something called a contingency fund. That sounds like it is tangential. Now, how exactly is that supposed to happen?

The President has talked largely about estate taxes, implying that farmers can leave their properties to sons and daughters. But what does that do to earn a living today and hold on for the rest of their productive years?

Anyone who saw the New York Times story this past weekend saw the heart-wrenching story about potato growers in Idaho facing their lowest prices in decades. They are worried about having an income. What will a tax cut do for them?

Then yesterday the President spoke on our Nation's energy policy. But, for agriculture, it was again the sound of silence. America has the ability to convert many of our crops into ethanol and biodiesel, throwing off the yoke of international fuel dependency. In fact, if we just converted our strategic petroleum reserve to a strategic fuels reserve and only fill 2 percent of it with biofuels, we would double the production of both ethanol and biodiesel in this country, helping to build that new industry from inside this Nation.

But the President did not mention it, not a word. But he did express his appreciation just yesterday to the OPEC ministers who agreed to hold price increases to only 7 percent for imported fuel. He thought that gesture by them was comforting. It is not comforting to me.

Mr. President, why do you not offer some comfort to America's farmers and ranchers and help them get their prices up the same 7 percent that you are willing to accept for oil? Why do you not help them develop new products like ethanol and biodiesel? Why do you not tell them what you propose to break them out of the cycle of dependency on government farm payments? Why do you not offer an agriculture policy that our farmers and ranchers can look toward the future?

Let me start in this way. America's farmers and ranchers need a new farm